

"Under the Trooper's Hat: Safe Winter Driving Practices"

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Driving in North Dakota during the winter means snow, sleet, and ice which leads to slower traffic, dangerous road conditions, hot tempers, and unanticipated hazards. Here are some suggestions to help you make it safely through the winter.

Know the road conditions BEFORE you travel. Check the North Dakota Department of Transportation Travel Information Map (<http://www.dot.nd.gov/travel-info-v2/>) or call 511. Download the "ND Roads" app to your smartphone or a portable electronic device, the app includes updated road conditions.

Listen to forecasts on radio, TV, cable weather channels, or check the daily paper. If the weather is dangerous and road travel is difficult, wait until conditions improve. If you can't wait, let someone know when you plan to leave, the route you are taking, and your expected arrival time.

Brush the snow off your vehicle windows and tail and brake lights before you leave. Turn on your headlights to increase visibility to other motorists and snowplow operators.

Never use cruise control when driving on wet, icy, or snow covered roadways.

Fill the gas tank and check to make sure the windshield washer reservoir is full. Check to make sure tires are properly inflated and your vehicle runs well enough to make the trip.

If your vehicle becomes stuck, stay with the vehicle! Most deaths occur when people leave their vehicle and lose their direction in low visibility conditions. Open windows slightly and run the vehicle and heater for short periods to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. It's also important to occasionally check to make sure the exhaust pipe isn't clogged by snow. Stay active and do not panic.

Carry a winter survival kit. The kit should include: a working flashlight and extra batteries; reflective triangles and brightly-colored cloth strips or other material; a compass; a first aid kit; an exterior windshield cleaner; an ice scraper and snow brush; wooden stick matches in a waterproof container; scissors and string/cord; non-perishable, and high energy foods (unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy). Carry supplies to keep you warm, such as heavy gloves or mittens, winter socks, a cap, and blankets.

When driving, keep a safe distance from snowplows. Do not crowd the plow!

Never drive through the "whiteouts" caused by snowplows. Snowplows will often pull over to allow traffic to pass. Be patient and wait until you can clearly see the road ahead before passing a snowplow.

Do not assume there is good traction because the roadway looks sanded. Sand can sink into the snowpack, leaving a slick, very slippery surface.

Most importantly, slow down and drive for the conditions. Most winter crashes are caused by driving too fast for the conditions.

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